

Faribault-Martin County Joint Transit Board  
Martin County Courthouse  
201 Lake Avenue  
Fairmont, MN 56031  
Wednesday February 17, 2021 9:30 a.m.

The meeting was called to order at 10:45 a.m. by Board Chairman Elliot Belgard. This meeting was held with teleconference attendance capabilities under Minnesota Statute 13D.021 which allows for teleconference meetings while in a state of emergency during a health pandemic.

Joint Transit Board members present in person were: Faribault County Commissioners Groskreutz, Roper, and Young. Participating Board Members via internet teleconference were Martin County Commissioners Belgard, Smith, and Flohrs and Faribault County Commissioners Loveall and Anderson. Also present in person was Jeremy Monahan, Faribault – Martin County Transit Director.

Commissioner Belgard asked if there were any additions to the agenda. There were none. Motion made by Commissioner Groskreutz, seconded by Commissioner Young to approve the agenda as presented. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

A motion was made by Commissioner Young, seconded by Commissioner Groskreutz to approve the meeting minutes for the December 22, 2020 Full Board meeting, January 8 and February 5, 2021 Executive Committee meetings. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

Discussion turned to the Facility Construction project. Monahan reported the contract with APX Construction Group was executed in mid- January. The preconstruction meeting was held with APX and the subcontractors on February 5<sup>th</sup>. Delivery of materials began on February 9<sup>th</sup> and work on framing has begun. The project is finally underway and completing quantifiable tasks. There was brief discussion on some change order issues that occurred within the first few days that Monahan worked with the Executive Committee to resolve. The construction schedule set by APX has plans to be completed by the end of March but Monahan believes realistically it will likely roll into April.

Discussion turned to the Paid Administrative Leave (PAL) Policy. Monahan noted at the December Full Transit Board meeting the PAL was extended through February 2021 at which time it could be considered for extension based on both need and if it would be permitted under MnDOT covering 100 percent of operations costs. MnDOT has since stated that all regulations that were allowed under the CARES Act will be extended for their funding to cover 100 percent of operations. Therefore the PAL policy can be extended past February if desired. After discussion the February Executive Committee passed a motion recommending the Full Board extend the PAL policy through April 2021 at which time it can be considered again for extension further into 2021.

Motion made by Commissioner Loveall, seconded by Commissioner Flohrs, to follow the Executive Committee's recommendation of extending the Paid Administrative Leave Policy

through April 2021 and revisiting the topic at the April Full Board meeting to consider any potential extension. Motion passed unanimously via roll call vote.

Discussion turned to food delivery and transportation for vaccine appointments. Monahan reported that he looked into fare free rides for vaccine transportation after an inquiry from Human Services. He reported that he learned transit systems are allowed to provide transportation for vaccines without fares if desired despite having reinstating fare collection. It was also learned that food delivery efforts can continue without fares as well. These exceptions are allowed because of the pandemic situation.

In their February meeting the Executive Committee made a motion to allow these two uses to be done without fares through April 2021 at which time it can be reconsidered. Monahan then contacted area agencies to alert them of these services that will be continued or is now available without fares. They very much appreciated our offer. There was brief discussion regarding monitoring use of the benefits to avoid abuse by passengers.

Discussion turned to the 2021 Vehicle Purchase effort. Monahan reported that during the August Full Board meeting the effort to apply for purchasing two replacement vehicles in 2021 was approved however it was unknown at that time how many, if any, vehicle purchases would be approved by MnDOT. On Tuesday November 3<sup>rd</sup> MnDOT notified Monahan via email that funding will be made available for up to seven (7) vehicle replacements in 2021 due to the age, mileage, and maintenance costs of a bulk of the system's fleet. The Transit Board or member counties would be responsible for 10 percent of the estimated \$95,000 purchase price per vehicle for six (6) of the vehicles. One (1) vehicle would be funded by State and Federal funds 100 percent without any local share required. The deadline to respond to this opportunity was a short time frame, due by Monday November 9<sup>th</sup> so if it was desired to move ahead with modifying the application to purchase all seven vehicles, the Executive Committee would have to decide without consulting the Full Transit Board.

At the November Executive Committee meeting there was discussion about the pros and cons of purchasing so many vehicles at once and then what would happen once five years from now many of them needed replacing. It would likely not be possible to replace that many vehicles at one time again. There was discussion about the amount of up-front cash that would be needed to purchase all the vehicles at once that would likely need to come from the member counties until the state reimburses the 90 percent. It was noted that it is possible that some of the local share could be funded with the Transit Reserve fund which after 2019 was sitting above \$80,000. It was also noted that the State's general financial situation for the next few years is fairly foggy in terms of their ability to have funds for these types of purchases. It was also noted that the vehicles that are eligible for replacement under this proposal will likely be another 18 months older until these purchases are made and received. Therefore at the November Executive Committee meeting a decision was made to take advantage of this opportunity and modify the application to request all seven vehicles. MnDOT stated that until the contract is signed the decision can still be changed if needed due to local circumstances or sentiment. Monahan said the application process is still moving forward with the seven vehicles. In addition there are still the 2020 replacement vehicles and accessible mini-van purchases that need to be made. Monahan said these purchases are likely to be completed in March or April.

Discussion turned to New Business regarding the consideration of adopting a policy regarding reservations and no-shows for the transit system. Monahan reported that the policy needed to be clarified after some misunderstandings with passengers. The proposed policy along with modification of a couple existing policies' language would make the rules and expectations clear regarding reservations and what would happen for passengers who are perpetual no-shows. The policy and modifications were the following:

- *We request that round trip return reservations be made upon completion of the first leg of your trip. A round trip return reservation made without being ready when the bus arrives for the return trip and without cancellation will be recorded as a "no show."*
- *No shows prevent the transit system from functioning properly. Please call ahead 2 hours if you must cancel your reservation. Perpetual "no shows" may have their riding privileges suspended. After the first 3 "no shows" without a 2-hour cancellation, a 1 week suspension from riding Prairie Lakes Transit routes will may be imposed. A "no show" following a suspension of riding privileges will may result in an indefinite suspension of riding privileges.*
- *Prairie Lakes Transit reserves the right to bill passengers that perpetually "no show" without a 2-hour cancellation.*

It was noted that in January the Executive Committee unanimously passed a motion recommending that the Full Board adopt the policy addition and modifications. After discussion a motion was made by Commissioner Roper, seconded by Commissioner Anderson to approve adoption of the policy addition and modifications. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

Discussion turned to consideration of adopting a policy regarding requiring rider attendants. Monahan reported that this proposed policy was developed due to several instances of drivers having to go above and beyond a reasonable accommodation, sometimes endangering the safety of the driver or the passenger, for riders that would normally be provided transportation by a Special Transportation Service (STS). This policy would require specific riders who have shown they are not able to be transported independently to be required to have an attendant with them or not be allowed to use the public transit system. The STS providers have different training and licenses that public transit does not have. In February the Executive Committee passed a motion recommending to the Full Board that they adopt the policy. The proposed policy reads as follows:

- *Prairie Lakes Transit is a public transit provider. As such we are not trained, licensed, nor authorized to provide Special Transportation Service which include specialized medical transportation for those who are not able to be transported independently. If an incident or incidents occur with specific individuals that make it obvious we are being asked to provide a service above and beyond a "reasonable accommodation" we reserve the right to require an attendant ride along with said passenger. The attendant will be provided a ride without a fare charged. If an attendant is not available the rider may be referred to a Special Transportation Service provider for their transportation needs.*

There was discussion regarding where the attendant would be provided from and it was noted it would be up to the rider or their caregivers to provide the attendant, not the transit system. Also discussed was how if this policy is adopted it would have to be enforced consistently and not show any favoritism or bias. A motion was made by Commissioner Young, seconded by Commissioner Loveall to follow the Executive Committee recommendation and adopt the policy addition. Motion was passed unanimously by roll call vote.

Discussion turned to the Ridership Report. Monahan noted that the numbers are still lower than desired, especially in Martin County, but planning is ongoing with assistance from the State to see how to maximize our service hours in the future considering our new circumstances in our region. It is believed that the loss of the MRCI ridership routes can account for most of the 25 to

30 percent drop monthly in Martin County. Faribault County has recovered ridership on their routes to almost pre-pandemic January numbers. It was noted however that reinstating fare collections may affect the ridership numbers. The first week of February saw a large amount of token pack sales and steady ridership. People that need to use the transit are still going to use it. Comments heard by staff from riders include they were very happy to have the free rides while they were available but now that the fares are back, they will just start paying the fares again.


Discussion turned to the Bill Payment List. Monahan presented a report showing all bills paid since the December 22, 2020 Full Transit Board meeting. He noted most bills were business as usual. The ISG bills were not for operations but rather for the construction project contract. Also he noted the large payment to MCIT in January was the annual property and workers compensation premium payment.

It was noted the next two Executive Committee meetings are scheduled for Friday March 5<sup>th</sup> and Friday April 9<sup>th</sup> at 8:00 a.m. at the Martin County Courthouse in Fairmont with the potential for teleconference attendance. The next Full Transit Board meeting date is scheduled to take place on April 21<sup>st</sup> following the Human Services meeting. The advertised start time for the Full Board meetings will now be 10:30 am instead of 9:30 am due to the Human Services board meetings now beginning at 9:00 am

With no further business to wit, a motion was made by Commissioner Loveall, seconded by Commissioner Young to adjourn and after a unanimous roll call vote the Board Chair adjourned the meeting at 11:45 a.m.

JOINT TRANSIT BOARD  
FARIBAULMARTIN COUNTIES

  
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Elliot Belgard, Joint Transit Board Chair

ATTEST:   
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Richard Koons, Board Secretary